

WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS

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Greetings and welcome to Fort Collins. We at the National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) have had the privilege of organizing and hosting four international symposia since 1993. The first three were on the topics of contraception and wildlife, repellents in wildlife management, and the economics of wildlife damage management.

Today, it is my pleasure to welcome you to our fourth symposium: the International Symposium on Managing Vertebrate Invasive Species. I know our Symposium's organizing committee has strived to bring you a diverse group of international speakers....all of whom are working on the cutting edge of invasive species research, management, and eradication. More specifically, much work is being done in the areas of early detection, rapid response, biological and economic impacts, prevention and control, resource recovery, public education and support, and global initiatives.

Before I share with you a little background on the mission of the National Wildlife Research Center and our reasons for hosting this important symposium, I would like to recognize the members of the Symposium's organizing committee who helped make this event possible: Drs. Kathy Fagerstone, Gary Witmer, Will Pitt, Mark Tobin, and Tyler Campbell; Stephen Kendrot, Robert Myers, John Sinclair, Diana Dwyer, and Gail Keirn. These individuals are here to ensure the Symposium runs smoothly and to assist you in any way. Please feel free to contact any of them for assistance while at the Symposium or in the future. I would also like to acknowledge and thank the Colorado State University's Conference Services for assistance with registration and coordination with the Hilton Hotel staff. The primary sponsors for this Symposium are the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service and the National Invasive Species Council.

The USDA's National Wildlife Research Center is headquartered here in Fort Collins on the Colorado State University's Foothills Research Campus. The Center also has eight field stations

located throughout the United States. Five of these field stations are actively involved in invasive species research (Hilo, Hawaii; Gainesville, Florida; Starkville, Mississippi; Bismarck, North Dakota; and Kingsville, Texas). The NWRC is the federal institution that provides national leadership for research and information to resolve human-wildlife conflicts. The Center applies scientific expertise to the development of methods and information while maintaining the quality of the environment shared with wildlife to resolve human-wildlife conflicts related to agriculture (crops, livestock, aquaculture, and timber), human health and safety (wildlife diseases, aircraft-bird strikes), property, threatened and endangered species protection, and invasive species management. The U.S. Department of Agriculture has been involved with invasive species management and research for quite some time. Recently, we completed construction of a 25,000-square-foot vertebrate invasive species research building in Fort Collins. This building will help us carry out the invasive species mandate of our APHIS mission. The building enhances our opportunities and abilities to study the biology, behavior and physiology of a variety of invasive wildlife species and to develop new methods of management and control. We are conducting research in our new invasive species building with brown treesnakes, Norway rats, roof rats, Polynesian rats, house mice, Gambian giant pouched rats, monk parakeets, Burmese pythons, and Nile monitor lizards. For additional information on the research conducted by the NWRC, please go to our website:

www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife_damage/nwrc/

In closing, I would like to note that this Symposium provides all of us with excellent opportunities to exchange ideas, build new partnerships, discuss and debate the effectiveness of existing tools and techniques, and to work together towards new initiatives involving invasive species. I wish you all a very thought-provoking, productive and fun week.